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ABSTRACT

Guided by findings from various studies, the general thesis of this study was that identity polarization tends to be a reflections of meaningful structural divisions within the Mexican American population. This study considered such social status attributes which seemingly serve as discrete indicators of group heterogeneity as sex, socioeconomic status, stability of household head's employment, parents' origins, and migrant farm-labor participation. Data were collected from questionnaires administered to 379 Mexican American high school sophomores residing in the Texas towns of Asherton, Rio Grande City, Roma, San Isidro, and Zapata in the spring of 1973. Determination of positive and negative ethnic identification was obtained through open-ended questions. Some findings were: "Chicanos" was the second most favored term, being preferred by 25 percent; 70 percent of those preferring "Mexican American" responded negatively to "Chicano"; a particularly high rate of negative identification was revealed among females; pro-Chicano identification was more than twice as great as negative identification among low SES males; SES appeared to have little bearing on Chicano identity among females; and for migrant males, pro-Chicano identification was twice as great as negative identification. (NQ)

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"Chicanos" and "Anti-Chicanos:" Selected Status Indicators of Ethnic Identity Polarization*

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Solidarity is an essential political resource for any group desiring to effect social change. This attribute becomes particularly critical for the political efficacy of an ethnic minority, which, by definition, tends to be a group deficient in such other relevant resources as money, experience, access to authorities, and legitimacy (Rosen, 1974: 279). As well as common lifestyles and values, a high degree of ingroup interaction, and negative treatment by those of the outgroup; the development of group solidarilty or "consciousness of kind" also is dependent upon the existence of symbolic expressions of unity (Gamson, 1968: 35-36; Shibutani and Kwan, 1965: 199-223). Perhaps the most important symbolic expression is the name employed for group identification. A popular label may aid in facilitating the evolution of group consciousness and also unity in reaction to adversity. Conversely, it has been suggested that the use of a label not commonly accepted among the minority may increase intraethnic divisiveness and conflict, thus, hindering effective organization and political action (Shibutani and Kwan, 1965:218).

The dramatic rise in Mexican-American political activism over the past decade undoubtedly has been one of the most significant developments in the Southwest. Concomitantly, increasing numbers of Mexican Americans have come to identify themselves as "Chicanos." As such, this appears to represent the emergence of a strong and positive sense of ethnic identity and "consciousness of kind." Unlike many previous labels which were employed to downplay ethnicity, the use of "Chicano" generally has come to symbolize militant ethnic pride, autonomy, and self-determination, and a rejection of adaptive behaviors premised on accommodation and assimilation. Nonetheless, identification with "Chicano" is by no means complete within the Mexican-American population. Some are seemingly opposed to the term because of its formerly prejorative connotations. Probably the greatest share of those rejecting "Chicano,"

however, are against its association with Chicano ideology, chicanismo, and/or the confrontative strategies which various Chicano organizations have tended to employ in the recent past.[1]

Although previous empirical research has failed to examine the question of Chicano identity polarization, a number of studies have addressed the more general problem of Mexican-American labeling variation. Terms of ethnic identification were found to significantly vary by region (Grebler et al, 1970; Nostrand, 1973), communities within regions (Teske and Nelson, 1973; Miller, 1976), socioeconomic status (Grebler et al, 1970; Miller, 1976), age (Torres-Metzgar, 1975), sex (Miller, 1976), and interactional situation (Sheldon, 1966; Stoddard, 1970). Generally, labels were more ethnically assertive and less euphemistic (e.g., "Spanish" or "Latin American") or inclusive (e.g., "American" or "white") in terms of the following conditions: (1) California (as opposed to Texas) residency; (2) residence in communities farther removed from the Border; (3) lower socioeconomic status, (4) among those under 30 years of age, (5) among males; and (6) within ingroup interactive contexts.

Guided by findings from these studies, the general thesis of this paper is that identity polarization tends to be a reflection of meaningful structural divisions within the Mexican-American population. That is, varying orientations toward "Chicano" are not randomly distributed, but rather, are partially a function of variables impeding the emergence of common values, intensive intra-ethnic communication, consistent interethnic experiences, and hence, "consciousness of kind." The present study, therefore, considers a number of social

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[1] For discussions on the etymology of "Chicano," see Simmen (1972) and Christian (1973). See Cuellar (1970), Rendon (1971), and Macias (1972) for discussions on chicanismo.

status attributes which seemingly serve as discrete indicators of group heterogeneity - namely, sex, socioeconomic status, stability of household head's employment,[2] parents' origins, and migrant farm-labor participation.

Collection of Data

Data were collected from a survey in the spring of 1973 among Mexican-American high school sophomores residing in the border region of southern Texas.

The towns (Asherton, Rio Grande City, Roma, San Isidro, and Zapata) in which students were surveyed exhibit several common characteristics: (1) numerically small populations; (2) high proportions of poverty families (over 50 percent of the total); (3) extremely high proportions of Mexican-American residents (more than 95 percent of the total in each community) and (4) traditional Mexican-American political dominance. Because of the latter two factors, it must be stressed that the five communities are somewhat atypical in comparison to other South Texas towns. Most cities throughout the region contain proportionately fewer Mexican-American residents and have tended to be politically and economically dominated by Anglos. Thus, interethnic prejudice and discrimination probably has been of considerably less magnitude in the study communities than in most other cities. Differential treatment has been basically premised on economic attainment and family background, rather than ethnicity. Of the five communities, this pattern of comparatively low interethnic antagonism is perhaps the most attenuated in Asherton as it is less than ten miles from Anglo-dominated Carrizo Springs, a town in which many Asherton residents are employed.

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[2]According to Grebler et al, "... in the lower Rio Grande Valley, and in San Antonio as well, the threat of destitution is so omnipresent that the sharpest status distinctions are said to be made between those with a steady job - or a year-round job - and those limited to a seasonal or otherwise unpredictable source of income" (1970:326).

Questionnaires were group adminstered by research assistants to all sophomores present on the day of the survey. Respondents were assured that their answers would be kept confidential. Each item was read aloud and the students were given sufficient time for written response before going on to the next question. Approximately 80 percent of the sophomore enrollment participated in the survey (Patella and Kuvlesky, 1975:5-6).

Determination of positive and negative ethnic identification was obtained through the following open-ended questions:

> Other people have a tendency to use catchy lables or names for different groups of people. In reference to our own ethnic group we tend to prefer some more than others and maybe even dislike some. In terms of the ethnic group you choose to identify yourself with, please answer the following questions.
>
> (1) The name or label you like most for your ethnic group?
>
> (2) The name or label you most dislike for your ethnic group?

Findings

Positive identification. Relative to preferred labels for ethnic identification among those of Mexican ancestry, one term was clearly predominant: "Mexican American" was chosen by 50 percent of the 379 respondents. "Chicano" was the second most favored term, being preferred by 25 percent. Only two respondents chose either "Latin American" or "Spanish American;" and less than 2 percent preferred "Mexican" or mexicano. Conversely, 14 percent identified with terms ("American" and "white") devoid of reference to Mexican ethnicity. Less than 2 percent stated that they either "did not care" about labels or "did not like" labels; and 8 percent failed to respond to the question.

Negative identification. The most disliked term was "Chicano" (43 percent). And, fully 70 percent of those preferring "Mexican American" responded negatively to "Chicano." On the other hand, only 4 percent of the respondents

Indicated dislike for "Mexican American." Other unfavored referents were: "Mexican" (7 percent); terms not related to Mexican ethnicity such as "Negro" and "White" (10 percent); and clearly derogatory labels such as "wetback" and "greaser" (10 percent). Approximately 20 percent did not respond to the question; and 6 percent indicated that they "did not care" about negative referents.

Chicano identification. Only those respondents identifying positively or negatively with "Chicano" were retained for purposes of further analysis. Of the total indicating an orientation toward the term, negative identification (anti-Chicano) was almost twice as great as positive identification (pro-Chicano).

Table 1. Orientations toward Chicano

Label	Percentage	Frequency
Pro-Chicano	36 %	89
Anti-Chicano	64 %	159
Total	100 %	248

Sex. A marked pattern of differentiation between males and females was noted for Chicano identification (see Table 2). While a majority of males indicated positive association, a particularly high rate of negative identification was revealed among females.

Table 2. Orientations by Sex

Label	Males	Females
Pro-Chicano	54 % (62)	20 % (27)
Anti-Chicano	46 % (52)	80 % (107)
Total	100 % (114)	100 % (134)
$X^2 = 29.9$		p = .000
lambda = .11		gamma = .65

Given these extreme differences in distributions, further analyses were controlled by sex.

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status was established on the basis of the occupation of the family's major money earner.[3] Analyses suggest (see Table 3), that SES is strongly associated with variance in orientations toward "Chicano" among males only. While high SES males were anti-Chicano by a ratio of two to one, pro-Chicano identification was more than twice as great as negative identification among low SES males. On the other hand, SES appeared to have little bearing on Chicano identity among females.

Stability of employment. Employment stability was inferred from a question asking whether the family's major money earner was presently working full-time or part-time, or was unemployed. For males (see Table 3), positive Chicano identity was strongly associated with decreasing employment stability. However, this variable had no apparent relation to ethnic identification among females.

Parents' origins. Parents' origins were determined through an open-ended question asking the birthplaces of mothers and fathers. All parents were found to have been born either in Mexico or the United States.[4] Statistical significance for relevant analyses was not established (see Table 3). Therefore, further interpretation was not warranted.

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[3]The occupational distribution was found to be extremely skewed. Therefore, responses were categorized as either High (professional, managerial, official, glamour, clerical, sales, skilled worker) or Low (operative, laborer, domestic). Students failing to respond to this question were given SES ranking on the basis of the reported educational level of father (High - some high school or above; Low - eighth grade or less and no information).

[4]If one or both parents were indicated as having been born in Mexico, the response was coded as Mexican origin.

Table 3. Chicano identification and selected status attributes - controlled by sex.

	Total	SES		Employment Status			Parents' Origins		Mig. F. W.	
Males		High	Low	Full-time	Part-time	Unemp.	Mexico	U. S.	Yes	No
Pro-Chicano	54 %	33 %	68 %	41 %	76 %	86 %	45 %	55 %	67 %	42 %
Anti-Chicano	46 %	67 %	32 %	59 %	24 %	14 %	55 %	45 %	33 %	58 %
Total %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
Total N	114	43	71	56	21	21	29	74	49	59
X^2 - P		11.8 - .001		16.0 - .000			.56 - .45		5.7 - .02	
Lambda		.29		.24			.06		.18	
Gamma		-.62		-.68			-.21		.47	
Females		High	Low	Full-time	Part-time	Unemp.	Mexico	U. S.	Yes	No
Pro-Chicano	20 %	25 %	18 %	15 %	24 %	21 %	22 %	19 %	20 %	21 %
Anti-Chicano	80 %	75 %	82 %	85 %	76 %	79 %	78 %	81 %	80 %	79 %
Total %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
Total N	134	36	98	59	29	19	36	93	35	94
X^2 - P		.36 - .54		1.1 - .58			.01 - .90		.007 - .93	
Lambda		.00		.00			.00		.00	
Gamma		.19		-.18			.09		-.03	

Migrant labor force participation. Respondents were simply asked if they had ever traveled away from home to engage in farm labor. Again, clear differences in orientations toward Chicano identification were noted among males but not among females (see Table 3). For migrant males, pro-Chicano identification was twice as great as negative identification. Conversely, a clear majority of non-migrating males were negatively oriented toward the label.

Discussion

Given a conflict perspective, we might logically expect to observe the most economically oppressed groups advocating to a greater extent an ethnically militant position. This was clearly revealed through analyses of Chicano identification polarity by socioeconomic status, stability of employment, and participation in the migrant farm-labor force. However, these structural variables only provided relevant differentiation among Mexican-American males. For females, these factors had no discernible effect on Chicano identification. It might be hypothesized, therefore, that the influence of structural position is mediated among females by a number of social psychological variables.

In all, perhaps the most critical determinant of identity polarization was sex. Males, regardless of status, were much more oriented to a positive Chicano identification than were females. Indeed, among females, predominant orientations toward "Chicano" were decidedly negative. One must necessarily ask what conditions account for such extreme variability by sex. A number of speculations might be advanced. For example, sex-role differences have been noted to be particularly acute in the more traditional Mexican-American families (Madsen, 1964; Rubel, 1966). Boys are supposedly socialized more toward independence than are girls. Aggression by males tends to be tolerated, and, in fact, cultivated; whereas females are expected to conform to the model of femininity and norms of submissiveness. A type of differential association

might also have relevance. While ideally girls are limited to the home, males are given freer parental rein, and thus, may be more likely to experience interethnic hostility. Other hypotheses, based on such potential sex related variables as subjective definitions of class, reference group and status mobility orientations, and perceptions of opportunity and discrimination; additionally might warrant future investigation.

Present findings, however, are clearly limited in terms of generalizability. Obviously, the data were not collected from a standard area, if indeed there is such an area in the Southwest. The vast majority of Mexican-American youths reside in highly urbanized centers wherein their ethnic group is a social, as well as numerical, minority. Conversely, the study communities are relatively isolated, small, and economically depressed settlements populated almost exclusively by Mexican Americans. While they are the numerical majority, Mexican Americans are also the social majority in the sense that fellow ethnics have historically dominated the local economy and polity. Consequently, those growing up in a Rio Grande City or a Zapata have probably undergone qualitatively different kinds of interethnic experiences than have Mexican Americans in say Los Angeles or San Antonio, or even in most other small South Texas towns.

Similarly, very little Chicano political activity has been noted in the study communities (Miller, 1975:85). Given the nature of local ethnic composition and traditional Mexican-American political control, however, the comparative absence of Chicano activism might logically be expected. Nonetheless, during 1966-67, the Rio Grande City - Roma area did serve as the principle Texas site for attempted farm labor organization by the United Farm Workers. The unsuccessful organizing thrust was accompanied by an extreme degree of law enforcement suppression and violence. Such events may have had important bearing on the formation of differential orientations toward Chicano

identification by social status among males. In a sense, though, relevant findings follow patterns similar to those existing in such a community as Crystal City before the advent of Chicano organizing activities in 1969. There, as in many other towns, middle class Mexican Americans largely tended to support the status quo (which in Crystal City was the Anglo dominated establishment). Through the course of mobilization and the school walkout, however, confrontative Chicano strategies and overreactions by Anglo authorities effected a broad shift in coalition from one essentially based on social class to one structured along the dimension of common ethnicity (Shockley, 1974). In short, the role of confrontation and reaction cannot be overlooked as an important factor facilitating the development of "consciousness of kind," and hence, change in orientations toward ethnic identification symbols.

The data presented in this paper, nevertheless, suggest that polarity relative to Chicano identity is associated with a number of factors which apparently produce status differentiation within the ethnic community. Obviously, the generalizability of these trends is circumscribed by time and place considerations. Future research might consider examining orientations in varying types of communities, developing more sophisticated measures for Chicano identification, as well as investigating the relevancy of various social psychological variables.

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